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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 27 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest terrorist incident to imperil peace and security along the Israel-Lebanon border.

This past Tuesday, 21 January, at approximately 3 p.m. (local time), Hizbullah terrorists fired anti-tank rockets and mortar shells at positions on the Israeli side of the Blue Line in the Mount Dov area. The unprovoked cross-border attack lasted about 30 minutes, during which time approximately 25 missiles and shells were fired. No injuries were reported as a result of the assault, but some damage was sustained by a nearby Israeli Defense Forces outpost. Hizbullah interrupted programming on its satellite television station, Al Manar to claim responsibility for the attack.

This attack is merely the latest in a long series of cross-border attacks perpetrated by Hizbullah since Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, in full and confirmed compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). That resolution further required the Government of Lebanon to establish its effective authority in the area and restore international peace and security. These obligations have been affirmed repeatedly in subsequent Security Council resolutions.

To date, Lebanon has not taken any significant measures to fulfil its obligations, nor has it acted to bring its policies into accord with the global campaign against terrorism. Consequently, Lebanon stands in breach of international law and Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000), 1337 (2001), 1365 (2001), 1391 (2002) and 1428 (2002), which call for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of effective Lebanese authority in the area. The Government of Lebanon is also in violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and established principles of international law, which call upon all States to refrain from providing any support, whether active or passive, to all

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persons or entities involved in terrorist acts, and to ensure that their territory is not used as a base for cross-border attacks.

Rather than fulfilling its obligations and thereby preventing a further deterioration in the situation along the Blue Line, Lebanon has continued to permit Hizbullah complete freedom of movement and action, and has even allowed the organization to strengthen and fortify its presence in the area, as acknowledged in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/38). The Government of Syria, which provides critical financial, logistical and political support to Hizbullah, and provides its leadership and operatives with safe harbour in Syrian-controlled territory, also bears responsibility for Hizbullah's actions and for the continuing instability along the Blue Line.

Hizbullah's actions not only are a danger to both Israeli and Lebanese civilians, but they also carry with them the potential of a dangerous regional escalation. Together with the belligerent statements of its leaders, Hizbullah, an organization with extensive terrorist networks and connections around the globe, has clearly signalled its intent to ignite a broader confrontation. While Israel is doing its utmost to act with restraint, while reserving its right to take steps to defend its citizens, it is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon to bring an end to Hizbullah's illegal activities and prevent the organization from further destabilizing the region.

Both the Secretary-General and the Security Council have repeatedly emphasized Lebanon's obligation to respect the integrity of the Blue Line and ensure a calm environment in southern Lebanon. In view of the upcoming renewal of the mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Israel reiterates its call on Lebanon to fulfil its obligations under resolution 425 (1978) and subsequent resolutions, as well as resolution 1373 (2001) regarding the suppression of terrorist acts. The international community bears a responsibility to impress upon Lebanon and Syria that security and stability will remain in jeopardy so long as they fail to fulfil their most basic obligations to prevent Lebanese territory from serving as a base for terrorism, end the activities of terrorist organizations currently operating freely in Lebanese territory and act to restore international peace and security along the Blue Line.

This letter is submitted as a follow-up to previous letters concerning the dangerous situation in southern Lebanon caused by the illegal attacks perpetrated by Hizbullah across the Blue Line, dated 10 December 2002 (A/57/642-S/2002/1347), 5 September 2002 (A/56/1032-S/2002/986), 8 July 2002 (A/56/1001-S/2002/743), 10 April 2002 (A/56/913-S/2002/374), 3 April 2002 (A/56/899-S/2002/348), 2 April 2002 (A/56/898-S/2002/345), 21 March 2002 (A/56/884-S/2002/301), 24 January 2002 (A/56/793-S/2002/115), 17 January 2002 (A/56/778-S/2002/79), 24 October 2001 (A/56/507-S/2001/1012), 5 October 2001 (A/56/443-S/2001/942), 6 July 2001 (A/56/161-S/2001/673), 16 April 2001 (S/2001/367), 16 February 2001 (A/55/792-S/2001/142), 6 February 2001 (A/55/767-S/2001/111), 26 November 2000 (S/2000/1121), 23 October 2000 (S/2000/1011), 19 October 2000 (S/2000/1002) and 7 October 2000 (S/2000/969).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Permanent Representative